

# THE EXAMINER,

A Sunday Paper,

ON POLITICS, DOMESTIC ECONOMY, AND THEATRICALS,

FOR THE YEAR 1808.

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PARTY IS THE MADNESS OF MANY FOR THE GAIN OF A FEW.—SWIFT.

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# PREFACE.

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THE PROSPECTUS IS TO BE FOUND IN THE FIRST NUMBER OF THIS VOLUME.

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**L**EGISLATORS, lovers, and journalists, are the three divisions of men that most hate to be reminded of their promises. The perjuries of the first are no subject for jesting: the second declare, that Heaven laughs at theirs: and as to the third, I am sure that both Heaven and earth, if the former has any thing to do with the matter, must laugh at theirs. It is with some pride therefore, that the *Examiner* can close his first volume, not only with a complacent retrospect towards his Prospectus, but with the approbation of those subscribers, who, as they were the first to doubt, are now the most willing to trust him.

As the good faith of the Prospectus has thus been acknowledged, I need not descant here upon what its promises have already told the public. It will be allowed me, however, for that very reason, while I sketch a slight review of what has been done, to explain what I have attempted without promising; and this consists of two endeavours: first, an humble attempt, exclusive of mere impartiality in great matters, to encourage an unprejudiced spirit of thinking in every respect, or, in other words, to revive an universal and decent philosophy, with truth for its sole object, and, second, an attempt to improve the style of what is called fugitive writing, by setting an example of, at least, a diligent respect for the opinion of literary readers.

I.—The community have become tired of that petty and prejudiced manner of journal-writing, which originated in party-spirit and ignorance: the proprietors of newspapers, who, with very late exception, have for a long time been divided amongst factions, could in fact procure no men of real spirit, or with the least tincture of philosophy, to manage their publications; or rather their own ignorance and literary corruption never induced them to make the trial: and if these feelings have hurt the style and reputation of newspapers, yet they have prevented true genius from being tempted against its conscience to add lustre to corruption, they have prevented the better part of society, thank God, from being dazzled any longer by political artifice, and they have at length exposed their own worthlessness. The death of two great party leaders gave a blow to party-spirit, of which reasonable men were willing to take every advantage; if the new powers had allowed them; but it now appears that a change of men opposite in opinion is nothing without a change of things opposite in principle. The abuses of the French revolution threw back many lovers of reform upon prejudices, that were merely good as far as they were opposed to worse: but every prejudice, essentially considered, is bad, is prejudicial; and there must be an end of that uxorious trick of pardoning the corruptions of the constitution for the sake of its benefits, a trick which those only would teach us, who have designs upon its weaknesses. Mere impartiality, with respect to men, that is, an indifferent repose amidst political bustle, will not teach us to be patriots, though it may hinder us from being placemen. We must shake off all our indolence, whether positive or negative, whether of timidity or of negligence, we must shake off all our prejudices, and look about us; and in this effort we must be assisted by philosophy.

And let us neither be alarmed by the name of philosophy, because it has been degraded by little men, nor over-awed, because it has been rendered arduous by great. Let us regard it in its original and etymological sense, as a love of wisdom, and not in its acquired and ornamental, as an attainment of it. The essence of philosophy is the cultivation of common reason, and as common things are in their nature most useful, though subject to disesteem, and in their perfection most delightful and admirable, so reason is in this respect like the most common of all things, the air, which is liable to so much corruption when shut up and hindered from circulation, but when suffered to extend abroad, encompasses the whole earth, and is at once the medium of light, and the mover of power. And a freedom from party-spirit supposes in some degree this necessary enlargement of reason; for he that looks continually even on the most brilliant leader of a faction is in as much danger of being unable to see any thing else properly, as he that fixes his eye on red, or yellow, or any other brilliant or violent colour; but to look generally on mankind, and on the face of things, leaves the perception as keen and as distinct, as to look on the colour of green, which is the general hue of nature. Freedom from party-spirit is nothing but the love of looking abroad upon men and things, and this leads to universality, which is the great study of philosophy, so that the true love of enquiry and the love of one's country move in a circle. This is the "zeal according to knowledge," which I would be an humble instrument of recommending.

## PREFACE.

II.—The ignorance and corruption of the journals naturally produced a correspondent style. The jarring spirit of past years seemed to have destroyed every political refinement both of speaking and writing. Graceful persuasion forsook the senate; wit and argument the press. The newspapers, occupied with momentary rumour and invective, appeared to have no leisure for any thing becoming; and as the sounds of speech are affected by a deranged constitution, the whole public voice grew vulgar as it grew violent. People are now beginning to change their tone in these matters; but even now, when every other species of literature has gained at least an elegant mediocrity, the progress of periodical style has scarcely reached correctness; and it is remarkable, that those papers which are the most politically corrupt, are still the most corrupt in every thing else. It becomes a public writer therefore to shew the company his intellect keeps, and to attempt a language worthy of the sentiments he feels, and the country for which he writes. If a true style consists of “proper words in proper places,” the definition is indisputable in political discussion, which ought to be the vehicle of the clearest and purest ideas. What concerns every body should be universally intelligible, though at the same time it should be written with a care for ornament, and it is for these reasons, that while I have avoided as much as possible the quotation of languages in politics, in order that every body might be able to read me, I have not hesitated to employ what little pleasantry I could, in order that every body might wish to read me. There is very little political writing in the daily papers; and their articles are read throughout, because they are short, as well as of daily and party interest: but I have ever remarked, that in the political essays of the weekly prints, the interest of the reader has been proportioned to the manner as well as matter of the writing. It is much the same in Theatrical Criticism, a department which none of the papers seem inclined to dispute with a person fond of the subject, the daily ones for want of independence, and the weekly for want of care. I am so immediately before the public in this subject, that I shall say little upon it here. Theatrical Criticism has always been a more popular art in France than in this country, and the consequence is that their theatres are twenty times better regulated. The literature with which it is connected allows a more ornamental style than politics; but I would not willingly quote Greek and Latin to the actors, and certainly not to the modern dramatists. The treatment of the passions, however, both in actors and dramatists, demands a greater portion of what the schools call Humanity, than any other subject of the day; and I am never so afraid of the criticism of my readers, as when my endeavours to separate the thousand niceties of human feeling may render me liable to the charge of wordiness. But the use of words on such an occasion should be distinguished from their abuse on occasions of simpler analysis. In short, as Theatrical Criticism is the liveliest part of a newspaper, I have endeavoured to correct its usual levity, by treating it philosophically; and as Political Writing is the gravest subject, I have attempted to give it a more general interest by handling it good-humouredly. The use of ridicule need not be defended here. As long as there is any thing ridiculous, so long will ridicule be proper and even necessary. Who can always be grave, as long as mankind are what they are?

Little Miscellaneous Sketches of character and manners have been introduced into the Examiner, as one small method of habituating readers to general ideas of the age. The Fine Arts also have met with an attention proportionable to their influence and national character, as well as to their rapid improvement in this country. Their improvement indeed is at once an honour and a disgrace to the nation, for it is the sole work of individuals. *The politicians and the government have not yet acquired the art, which they must acquire, of looking about them with enlarged eyes, and fighting the great enemy with his only good weapon and his only real glory, the cultivation of the human intellect.*

The Proprietors return their best thanks to their various correspondents, particularly to B. F. and H. R. the former for the enquiring and classical spirit with which he relieved the Editor when unable to attend the theatre; and the latter, for an Operatical Review, which in the present times has been the first criticism of the kind worthy the attention of sound readers.

Of their resolution to proceed as they have begun, the Proprietors say little. It is in the place where their country is,—at the bottom of their hearts.

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